

Community of Grace

Daily Walk for the week of March 23, 2020

The Goodness of God...Gives Sight **Written by Robbie Schwartz**

Monday, March 23rd

John 9: 1-41 is quite simply a story about the grace of God, epitomized by the blind man who said, "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." The man born blind could not see Christ and knew nothing of the prophet save his name. But Christ saw him. Jesus took the initiative – it was not the blind man who sought out the Son of God. Jesus came to him, and in the simplest understanding of what it means to have faith, the blind man went and washed the mud off in the pool of Siloam. While it is easy to have faith after the fact, the blind man was able to have faith in Jesus in part because He simply took the effort to improve this man's life. Jesus took the initiative to heal this man, and it is our role as Christians to follow that example to try and heal, help, or simply improve the lives of those around us.

Tuesday, March 24th

The text of John 9:1-41 puts on display what I believe would be the reaction of such miracles in today's world. It is hard to take actions on mere faith these days, as our over-analytical society wants us to understand how something happened instead of just accepting that something happened. On a grander scale than the Pharisees, Jesus likely would today be subjected to an investigation by Department of Homeland Security and of course the requisite congressional hearing to determine if in fact such a miracle took place and how it can be explained. But as Christians we know that

we are blinded by our own sins, and that God is the light from which our salvation comes. But would we suffer from spiritual blindness were we to cross Jesus' path today, or would we be able to accept Him on faith alone?

The Goodness of God... The Impossible Possibility **Written by Mary Anderson**

Wednesday, March 25th

Out of the Depths

"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered." Psalm 130:1-4. "Out of the depths" gives us an image of extreme crisis and may connect to the view in mythology of the watery floods representing chaos. The phrase "Fear the Lord" was common in Israel's teachings and writings in the Old Testament. It is in this psalm (and often) replaced with the word to "revere" God. When we are in a right relationship with God we will worship, love and obey him. Many of us have felt the need to cry out to God out of the depths of our sadness, illness, grief, worry and even depression. We can be reassured that God is always there listening to us, hearing our cries and wanting what's best for us. We need only listen for his voice of comfort and reassurance that he is always with us. **Prayer:** Holy God, even from the deepest pit of our despair you hear our cries of pain and pleas for redemption. Listen to our voices and make

us whole. Forgive us, cleanse us, and heal us. Amen

Thursday, March 26th Redemption

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;...O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities." Psalm 130:5,7-8. We are sinners who wait for the good news of God's forgiveness. Since Adam and Eve fell to temptation in the Garden of Eden, we all have a sinful nature. We also have a God who loves us and has the power to redeem and wipe away our sins. No sin is ever too much for God to forgive. We have hope and assurance in him. I fight temptation of some kind every day—whether it's eating more than I need to until I'm uncomfortably full, or eating the wrong things that taste so good, or buying another top because it's on sale which I justify by giving away an older one that got too small. Even if we do things much worse than this, we have a God who knows our heart and will forgive us if we only ask him to give us a purer heart. **Prayer:** God of passion, you care so deeply about your people and your creation and never give up on reconciliation. Guide us by your word and lead us back into the paths you have laid out for us. Amen

Friday, March 27th God Is In Charge

"Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come

upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.'" Ezekiel 37:4-6. The prophet, Ezekiel, has a vision of God's life-giving power in the reassembling and restoring of dead, dry bones to life. The Hebrew word for breath can also mean wind or spirit. We all have times in our lives when we feel lost and empty like dry bones. We feel far away from God and others. But God is always there ready to restore us to live, to place his spirit within us when we feel lost and lacking in His spirit. He restores us to new life with him if we only ask. In these scary times of constant news of the spread of the coronavirus, let us pray for God's peace and strength, being vigilant in protecting our health and that of others when we practice good hand washing (try saying the Lord's Prayer each time for that 20 seconds). But let us not forget who made us and will care for us no matter what is happening in our lives and the world. God loves us and will care for all our needs. **Prayer:** O God, giver of life, when you are at work in the world you bring life out of death and hope overcomes despair. Encourage us to share the good news of your love and care for us and reassure others you are in charge. Amen

Saturday, March 28th

Promises of New Life

Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely'... And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit

within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.” Ezekiel 37:11, 13-14. The “dry bones” of Ezekiel's vision represent the community of exile in Babylon, who have felt dead while in exile but God now promises new life. Christians have understood this vision to point to the resurrection of the dead. The Jews were wandering for hundreds of years and felt lost. They longed to return home to Jerusalem where they could worship God as they used to do. We all face new challenges in our lives and long for the way things were. We want to feel comfortable and be among familiar things. When I moved with my mother and brother from my home of almost 16 years to a new home and stepfather in Hawaii, it was hard and I longed for my “old” home and friends. When I worked in my last job for 20 years for home care and hospice, there were constant changes, it seemed, new ways of doing things like going from paper to computers, and through all the changes in my life and yours, God has always been there, supporting us and loving us. My faith reassures me that I am in God's kingdom here on earth and will be resurrected to a new life in Christ when my life on earth ends and He comes again. How blessed we are with this reassurance. The impossible indeed becomes possible. **Prayer:** Loving God, you make good on every promise you have made to your people. Continue to fill us with the gifts you intend for us. Plant your word in us and make it grow and bear good fruit. Amen

Sunday, March 29th For God's Glory
 “Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha... So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of Man may be glorified through it.’” John 11:1, 3-4. The raising of Lazarus from the dead only happens in the gospel of John and is the last of Jesus' signs. When he refers in verse 2 to Mary anointing him with perfume that will happen in the next chapter (12). Jesus knew that God had given him the power to raise Lazarus from the dead. He didn't rush to his home to perform his miracle even though his sisters were anxious and he arrived after Lazarus had been dead for 4 days. He wanted them and us to believe in God's power as evidenced in Jesus. When I am anxious and questioning God's timing in my own life, I need only to look to God's word in the Bible and the miracles of Jesus to know he loves me too and will take care of all of my needs. **Prayer:** God our refuge, in times of distress and pain, you provide a safe place for your people to dwell. Keep us from all harm and teach us your will, reminding us of Jesus' miracle of restoring Lazarus to life and guiding us in paths of righteousness. Amen